

(Washington, DC)— Today Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D) and Senator Herb Kohl (D) announced that Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) has been selected to receive nearly \$4.2 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Early Reading First Program. The grant has been awarded to MPS's Building Blocks to Literacy program for a period of three years, and will be used in three district schools, a faith-based child development center that partners with one of the selected schools, and an MPS charter school. MPS serves over 93,500 students with diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Over 78 percent of the students in the school system come from families in poverty.

"The investment in the education of children as young as five and six is crucial. At that age, their minds are developing rapidly and are eager for educational stimulation," said Congresswoman Moore. "The best part is it really works: kids who receive pre-kindergarten education are less likely to repeat grades, tend to exhibit greater social maturity, receive higher marks, and have higher educational aspirations for the future."

"Kids that develop strong reading skills at an early age have a lot of success during their school careers," said Senator Kohl. "I know Milwaukee Public Schools will be able to use this grant to give many of their youngest students the additional resources they need to thrive in school and life."

The aim of ED's Early Reading First Program is to use federal funding to support efforts at the local level to enhance the literacy and language skills of preschool-aged children, especially those who come from low-income families, so that they are provided with the fundamental knowledge necessary to attain optimal reading levels in kindergarten and elementary school.

Additionally, the program encourages the use of screening assessments to identify those young students who could be at risk for reading failure in order to help them develop the cognitive skills for later reading success. The initiative also assists with the integration of scientifically-based research and instructional materials into existing preschool programs.

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